



# Fact Sheet

## Put the Brakes on Distracted Driving

After completing an investigation of an August 5, 2010 highway crash in Gray Summit, Missouri, where a pickup driver, who had been texting, plowed into an unsuspecting tractor trailer and set off a series of collisions that killed two people, the NTSB issued its strongest recommendation yet to end driver distractions from portable electronic devices (PEDs). The NTSB has called on the 50 states and the District of Columbia to ban the nonemergency use of PEDs (other than those designed to support the driving task) for all drivers.

While the Missouri accident is the most recent PED distraction crash the NTSB has investigated, it is by no means the first. The first was nearly ten years ago, when a young driver, distracted by her cell phone, veered off the roadway in Largo, Maryland, crossed the median, flipped over, and killed five people.

Since then, the NTSB has investigated distraction-related accidents and incidents across all modes of transportation.

- In 2004, an experienced motorcoach driver, distracted on his hands-free cell-phone, failed to move to the center lane and struck the underside of an arched stone bridge on the George Washington Parkway in Alexandria, Virginia. Eleven of the 27 high school students on board were injured.
- In the 2008 collision of a commuter train with a freight train in Chatsworth, California, the commuter train engineer, who had a history of using his cell phone for personal communications while on duty, ran a red signal while texting. That train collided head on with a freight train — killing 25 and injuring dozens.
- In 2009, two airline pilots were out of radio communication with air traffic control for more than an hour because they were distracted by their personal laptops. They overflowed their destination by more than 100 miles, only realizing their error when a flight attendant inquired about preparing for arrival.
- In Philadelphia in 2010, a barge being towed by a tugboat ran over an amphibious "duck" boat in the Delaware River, killing two. The tugboat mate failed to maintain a proper lookout due to repeated use of a cell-phone and laptop computer.
- In 2010, near Munfordville, Kentucky, a truck-tractor in combination with a 53-foot-long trailer, left its lane, crossed the median, and collided with a 15-passenger van. The truck driver failed to maintain control of his vehicle because he was distracted by use of his cell-phone. The accident resulted in 11 fatalities.

### **Background:**

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that there were an estimated **3,092 deaths** in distraction-affected crashes in 2010.  
(<http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/2011/U.S.+Transportation+Secretary+LaHood+Announces+Lowest+Level+Of+Annual+Traffic+Fatalities+In+More+Than+Six+Decades>)
- According to the National Safety Council, drivers using cell phones look but **fail to see up to 50 percent** of the information in their driving environment.  
([http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Documents/Dstrct\\_Drvng\\_White\\_Paper\\_1\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Documents/Dstrct_Drvng_White_Paper_1_2011.pdf))
- Researchers for the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that a person using a cell-phone when driving is **4 times more likely** to have a crash that will result in going to the hospital.  
([http://www.bmj.com/highwire/filestream/399783/field\\_highwire\\_article\\_pdf/0/bmj.38537.397512.5.5.full.pdf](http://www.bmj.com/highwire/filestream/399783/field_highwire_article_pdf/0/bmj.38537.397512.5.5.full.pdf))
- AAA Mid-Atlantic reports that approximately 210,000 individuals drive on the Capital Beltway each day – and **more than half** do so while distracted by cell phones.
- According to a NHTSA observational survey, at a typical daytime moment in 2010, **5 percent of drivers** (or 660,000) were using a handheld cell-phone. (<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811517.pdf>)
- In a nationally represented survey of 2,000 U.S. residents conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, **69 percent** reported talking on their cell-phones while driving within the past 30 days and **24 percent** admitted to texting or e-mailing while driving.  
(<http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/2010TSCIndexFinalReport.pdf>)
- In a nationally representative telephone survey of 6,002 conducted for NHTSA, **77 percent** of respondents indicated they are willing to answer a call while driving on at least some driving trips. Not only do they answer, but **66 percent** keep driving and **45 percent** hold the phone in their hand when they do. (<http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811555.pdf>)
- A 2010 NHTSA demonstration program using high-visibility enforcement in Syracuse and Hartford resulted in **decreases in handheld use and texting**.  
([http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/distracted\\_driving/pdf/TSF\\_RN\\_HighEnforcementCT-NY\\_HS8113769.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/distracted_driving/pdf/TSF_RN_HighEnforcementCT-NY_HS8113769.pdf))
- Over the past 8 years, the NTSB has issued **18 safety recommendations** related to distractions from portable electronic devices: Aviation: 1 , Highway: 10 , Marine: 6 , Rail: 1.

*The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety, and assisting victims of transportation accidents and their families.*

*For more information, visit: [www.NTSB.gov](http://www.NTSB.gov).*